

# Evaluation of Slí na Sláinte Routes in Schools (Slí@School)

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## Background

The Slí@School programme is an adjunct programme to Slí na Sláinte, which translates to 'path to health', an initiative developed by the Irish Heart Foundation (IHF) to encourage walking. Under this programme, accessible and inclusive paths have been developed and promoted within communities and schools across Ireland. There are a total of 400 Slí routes across the country, of which 177 are school-based.

## Aim and objectives

The aim of this project was to explore the value of existing Slí na Sláinte routes as perceived by school staff and students. The overarching goal was to inform the IHF's current programme for schools and to assist in prioritisation of health promotion programmes for the school sector.

## Design and methods

A qualitative design was used to explore the perceptions of staff and students. Teachers responsible for the Slí@School programme, and students, particularly those in Junior Cycle and Transition Years, were engaged through interviews and participatory workshops respectively. Inductive thematic analysis was utilised.

## Findings/Results

The findings illustrate that the programme is valued by schools and has considerable potential for improving the health and lives of young people, as well as members of the community. The routes were predominantly used at break and lunch times, but they were also used during class time for Physical Education or other subjects. Notable attributes of the routes included positive impacts on physical, mental, and social health. Barriers to the use and uptake of the Slí@School routes included poor awareness of the routes, cost implications, and



access to and accessibility of the routes. Facilitators for the programme included existing school infrastructure, supportive management, students' enthusiasm, cross-linkages with other programmes and a holistic health promoting perspective to the routes. The COVID-19 pandemic also provided the impetus for the Slí routes to be utilised by teachers extensively.

### Patient Public Involvement

Participatory workshops were carried out with students during the school day, in-person and online, employing the Padlet platform. Padlet is a global application that provides a 'wall layout/canvas' platform that can be used to gather information in an easy and intuitive manner. This platform was chosen for its easy accessibility and because it supports posts across multiple formats (text, images/GIFs, drawing, links, among others), as well as the option for anonymous contributions. The workshops were planned with a participatory approach, and dialogue and probes were used concomitantly as research tools to generate evidence on students' attitudes and use of Slí routes.

### Knowledge Translation

A report has been submitted to the IHF outlining the methodology, data, and findings. The report is currently being reviewed by the IHF.

### Dissemination

IHF may publish the report online following internal review.